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World Food Programme

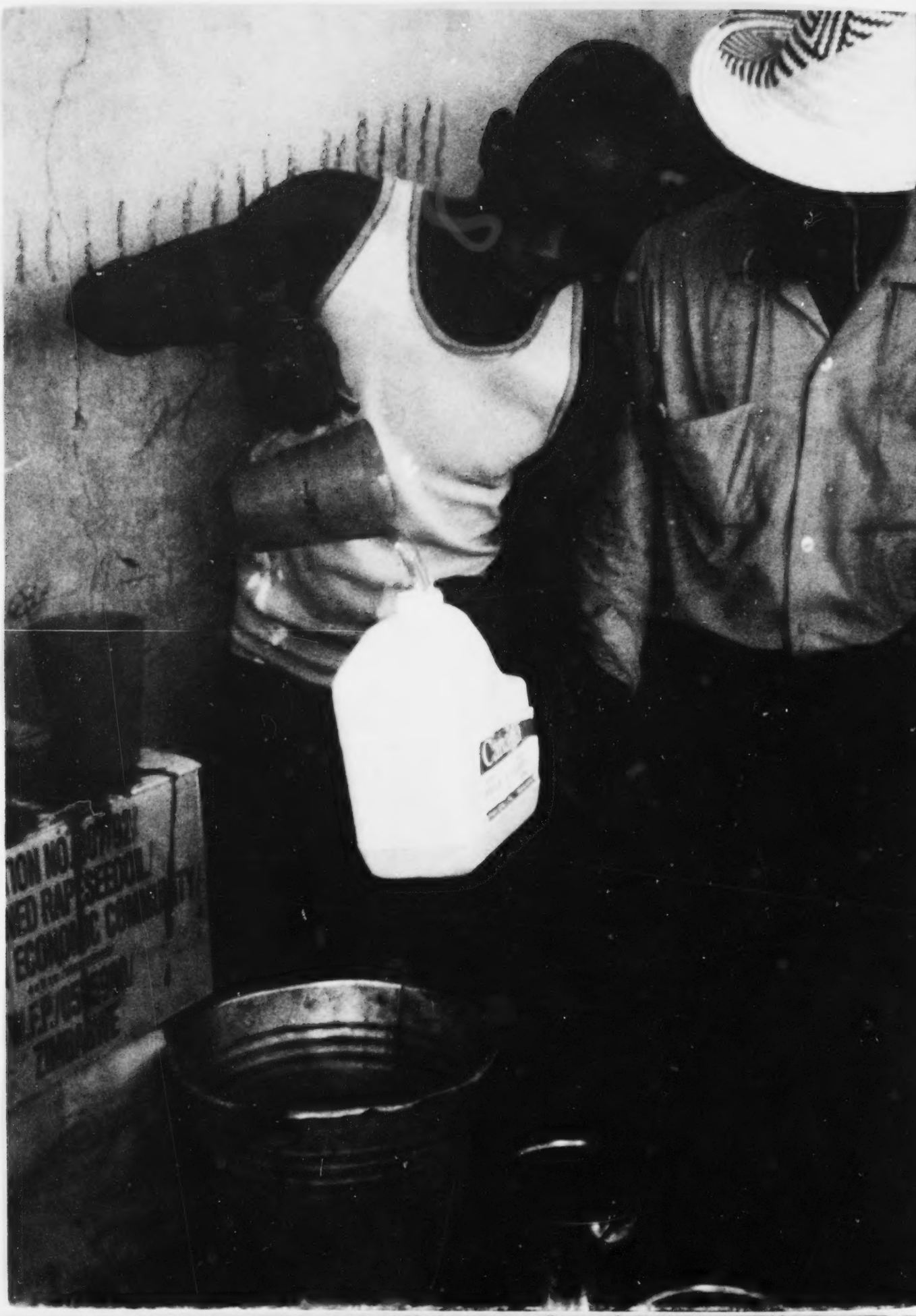
Journal

Madagascar
A BETTER WAY OF LIFE FOR STREET PEOPLE

Human Rights
FOOD A BASIC RIGHT

Angola
SOME RESPITE FROM THE FIGHTING

No. 26 October - December 1993



Journal

World Food Programme

Madagascar
PERE PEDRO OFFERS STREET PEOPLE A NEW LIFE **page 2**
Père Pedro, almost single handedly, has given a decent way of life to hundreds of poor people whose only home was a cardboard shack next to the railway line.

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WFP Mercedes Sayagues

Martine Rasoahartivony dreamed of finishing high school and becoming a secretary but the combined effects of personal problems and Madagascar's structural adjustment programme, which raised school fees and unemployment levels, dissolved her dream. At 16, Martine left home to look for a job. She ended up picking garbage and sleeping on the streets of Antananarivo, Tana for short, the hilly crowded tumbledown capital of Madagascar.

By the time she was 21, Martine had had one baby, lost another when she was seven months pregnant and was expecting her third. She and her husband, also a garbage picker, lived among some 100 families in a cluster of cardboard shacks by the railway tracks, permanently threatened with eviction by city authorities. Every time she became pregnant her husband disappeared for months.

Life looked bleak until one day in 1991 a tall burly man with a mop of reddish hair and a bushy beard came by and made them a proposition: would they like to change their lives, have a regular job, a brick house, clean water and meals for the children? Nothing would be for free: they would have to work hard but they would see the fruits of their efforts.

The man was a priest, Pedro Opeka, an Argentine of Slovenian origin with a dream and the iron will and contagious enthusiasm to make it come true. After 20 years in the rural south of Madagascar, Père Pedro, as he is affectionately known, was transferred in 1989 to Tana and was shocked by the numbers – maybe 50,000 – of homeless people in a city of two million.

The homeless mushroomed as the economy crumbled with the collapse of world prices for vanilla, coffee and cloves, coupled with economic mismanagement by previous governments. So many people now live on the streets that there is a name for them – the *quatre mis*, which ironically means "four walls".

Père Pedro could not walk unmoved past the groups of ragged *quatre mis*. "There is poverty in the south" he says, "but with dignity. In Tana, it's pure misery. Something had to be done."

What hit Père Pedro most was the plight of about 300 families living off, and by, the municipal garbage dump. Every day, children, women and men compete with pigs and dogs for the miserable rubbish discharged by the Municipality's brand new trucks. Because the garbage has already been picked in the streets of Tana, there is little left of value – some charcoal, rags, banana stalks and bones. So the pickers build tunnels to burrow into the layers of garbage from *la première république* of 20 years ago, more prosperous times when people threw away broken glass, dishes and toys.

An 80 per cent mortality rate for children under five was not unusual for families living in the dump. Children suffered from respiratory diseases caused by breathing toxic fumes as the garbage burns day in, day out, and the night shift of pickers burn car tyres for light, releasing lung-damaging vapours.

Père Pedro obtained land from the city, food from the World Food Programme and set up a village called *Manantenasoa* – a place for a better life – on a hillside overlooking the dump. Two hundred homeless families moved in and began building rows of wood and concrete houses through a food-for-work scheme.

Two years later, 4,000 homeless people are settled in five villages around Tana. *Manantenasoa*, where Médecins sans frontières recently opened a daycare centre and dispensary, serves as a reception and transit centre. The voluntary association founded by Père Pedro, called *Akamasoa* – good friends – has 40 staff members and dozens of volunteers who help the homeless become self-sufficient.

Akamasoa provides meals and tools until families can make it on their own. Only children, the sick and the elderly are completely supported by the organization. The people are

responsible for their villages and must take on individual work and collective tasks such as building houses.

A nearby abandoned quarry was reopened, where adults work for an average daily wage of between 50 US cents and US$1.40, according to production. Each village has a centre where women apply their traditional embroidery skills to make tablecloths for sale in the markets of Tana.

Walking among the wooden shacks reserved for new arrivals, Père Pedro pauses to pat a child or talk to a woman holding a newborn baby. His emotion is real, his connection to people heartfelt.

"This is the only place in town where a destitute woman and her children are listened to and sheltered, where she can get a house, a job and education for her children," he says. "Who knows how many are roaming, waiting for a chance for a better life?" The change in lifestyle, however, is slow and painful. "You don't emerge from a lifetime of misery, violence and squalor in just one year," says Père Pedro.

The homeless need constant follow up and the *Akamasoa* staff need plenty of patience. Some homeless return for a while to the streets but then come back to the villages; only five per cent drop out. Among the majority who stay, slowly violence decreases; there are fewer drunks, fewer abused children, fewer battered wives.

"The Malagasy people are among the most joyful in the world," says Père Pedro. "But misery and rejection had made these people lose some essential part of humanity – their ability to feel."

Today, the garbage pickers have a band that plays lively folk tunes with an old accordion and percussion. At the daycare centre and the school, children sing and clap as children do all over the world. "They didn't know how to sing when they were out in the dump chasing the garbage truck," says Père Pedro.

It is more than joy these people have recovered. "We try to help them rediscover their self-esteem, a work ethic, the habits of living in decent quarters and going to school," says Père Pedro.

Back in 1990, when Père Pedro approached WFP, its Director of Operations in the country was a bit sceptical and promised assistance for only three months, remembers Père Pedro with a smile.

However, WFP's help continues. People build their houses through food for work. Children at school and daycare centres have meals provided by WFP. The embroiderers are partially paid in food. Families that farm in the village of Antolojanahary, 60 kilometres out of Tana, receive food until they are self-sufficient.

WFP Mercedes Sayagues

Martine with her third child, Cynthia. The first baby to be born in the village of Ambatuve.

"WFP believed in us when nobody else did," says Père Pedro fondly. "Without WFP, we wouldn't be here today."

Without *Akamasoa*, the 500 children who now attend the school built near the garbage dump would still be illiterate and condemned to live the same life as their parents. When the school was opened, children would hear the garbage truck coming and run out of the classroom to the rubbish. They no longer do that.

Martine's third child, Cynthia, was the first baby to be born in one of the resettlement villages, Ambatuve. The family lives in a small brick house with a garden plot. Martine earns money embroidering, her month-old baby nestled by her side. Her husband returned two months ago, in time for Cynthia's birth. "He is a very unstable man," says Martine. "However, the important thing is that I have changed. I had fallen very low but I have pulled myself up."

by Mercedes Sayagués

Mercedes Sayagués, WFP's Senior Information Officer, is based in Zimbabwe.

Montenegro

A safe haven for refugees

As head of the household, Zorica does all the things she used to do before the eruption of the Balkans war – feed her children and lay down the domestic law when the children grow restless. Now, however, her household is a converted barracks-cum-refugee centre near Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro.

Even though she and her family were forced to flee the fighting that engulfed Sarajevo and destroyed her home, Zorica considers herself fortunate as she strives to recover a sense of normality in her life. After seeing many of her friends die in the conflict, Zorica and her family fled south and found their way to this centre for displaced people. Life at the centre appears strikingly normal, considering that war is raging not more than 100 kilometres to the north.

Montenegro is not – yet – directly involved in the fighting and has thus been widely ignored by the world press. But while the actual fighting may be localized, the brutal consequences of the Balkan conflict are felt far and wide, as Zorica and her family will attest.

Since war erupted, more than 60,000 refugees, 30 per cent of whom are muslims, have flooded into Montenegro. While this number may seem small in comparison to the millions of affected people in areas such as Bosnia, the refugee burden is significant in this – the poorest and smallest – of the former Yugoslav republics. Montenegro is quickly becoming a textbook example of the devastating indirect impact of war and the direct impact of economic sanctions. In September 1993, more than 12 per cent of the total population of Montenegro consisted of people displaced due to the recent fighting.

Largely dependent on trade, the Montenegran economy is steadily being extinguished by the economic blockade of Serbia. Inflation is at 50-70 per cent daily and fuel and basic food necessities are becoming increasingly scarce.

Despite this economic pressure, the Government of Montenegro has kept its borders open for all people displaced by the conflict. Of course, this influx of refugees places another heavy burden on Montenegro's ever more fragile economy.

The World Food Programme is an integral link in a remarkable chain of interagency cooperation that is trying to provide assistance for people affected by the conflict in former Yugoslavia. WFP is responsible for delivery up to Podgorica, where UNHCR manages the regional warehouse. At this point, UNHCR is in charge of storage and delivery to all 21 municipalities, called *opstinas*, where distribution takes place. WFP and UNHCR, in collaboration with the International Federation of Red Cross Societies (IFRC) and the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), monitor the distribution system and food storage. The Montenegran Red Cross is responsible for the distribution of food to refugees with assistance from IFRC and ECHO.

In Montenegro, a remarkable 92 per cent of displaced people have found shelter with families in private homes – sometimes relatives or friends of the refugees. If unable to

UNHCR Annette Hollmann

Lunch time for refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

pick up food supplies at a main drop-off point, then the International Committee for the Red Cross will sometimes deliver food to the refugees. The Montenegran Government helps to arrange stays in private homes and is in charge of other collective housing for refugees and displaced people. For the last year, Zorica and her family have been staying in this type of housing.

These centres, mostly old barracks or vacant low-income housing, accommodate anywhere from a couple of hundred to several thousand people. Some centres are more comfortable than others, but all appear to have basic services – adequate shelter, beds, running water and food.

Regardless of where they live – in a private home or in a collective centre – all displaced people receive the same daily food allowance from WFP. So far more than 55,000 people have received assistance in Montenegro. The host families also receive a small monthly allowance from the Government which eases their burden.

However, as the local economy continues to rapidly disintegrate, the situation of some ordinary Montenegrans has become just as desperate as that of the refugees. The socio-economic distinction between host and guest is becoming blurred. But at least in Montenegro, the safety net has held – almost all needy people have been helped, regardless of their official status.

Paul Wyatt is a Logistics Consultant for WFP in Montenegro. Although his primary mission is to ensure that food supplies destined for Montenegro make it to Podgorica he is also concerned that the food goes to those who need it most – the refugees. "Working closely with UNHCR, we have just recently toured and inspected all 21 *opstinas* and we hope to make this a regular monthly procedure", says Mr Wyatt.

Paul Wyatt was concerned about a shipment that had just arrived in Bourgas, a Bulgarian port on the Black Sea. Some 14,000 tonnes were waiting to be off-loaded. As the UN Sanctions Committee does not at present allow the use of the Port of Bar, Bourgas is the main port for emergency supplies into Montenegro. It is not exactly the most convenient – after the slow, circuitous sea voyage to Bourgas, truck convoys have to traverse the length of Bulgaria and Serbia before entering Montenegro, a trip that sometimes takes weeks.

The work of the UN agencies in war-surrounded states like Montenegro not only deals with the present but also tries to foresee future needs. WFP and UNHCR are constantly searching out the latest intelligence information in order to forecast where new refugee movements will occur. This allows them to prepare accordingly and is becoming more and more important as Montenegro becomes known as a "safe haven" for refugees.

For instance, in mid-July, the WFP staff in Montenegro kept watch on the area around Mostar in southern Bosnia because as the town became more tightly surrounded, the likelihood of an influx of refugees into neighbouring Montenegro increased. UN staff members met with officials near the border to discuss the possibility of tens of thousands of people streaming across into Montenegro. *Opstinas* and collective centres were then mobilized as quickly as possible. Three weeks later Mostar fell.

As more and more people affected by war pour into Montenegro, the economy shrinks day by day. WFP and other agencies are forced to play a deadly waiting game in which the rules are refashioned daily by distant warring forces. In the meantime, Zorica waits for the day she can take her family home.

by Bradley J. Busetto

Bradley Busetto is an American freelance writer.

The opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily those of WFP.

Sudan

Villages destroyed by war

The Pari Tribe of southern Sudan lived in an ancient settlement of seven villages, built around massive rocks, north-east of Nimule. Each village had a different clan and chief. This area is still one of the most beautiful places in the south, even though the settlement has been destroyed by war and little remains.

WFP Gillian Hazell

The Pari tried to keep themselves apart from the inter-factional wars ravaging southern Sudan. But in January 1993, the village was attacked and the people fled to the bush. Six months later an estimated 75,000 people are still living in the bush.

After the rainy season, the Pari wait for the vegetation to dry so they can cut it and use it to rebuild their houses. This is the most difficult time for them. The bush foods have almost run out and it will be almost three months before they can reap this year's sorghum harvest.

During this lean period, WFP is delivering food on a weekly basis. The tribal chiefs and the strongest men come each week to unload the planes in Torit, then the food is distributed to each village chief. The sacks of food are carried back into the bush for secondary distribution to the people. The NGO Concern, is trying to set up a feeding centre for the children. But it is still difficult to entice the children out of the bush to be fed.

Walking amidst the ruins of the village of Akon, our guide, Torek, was keen to impress on us how beautiful the village was. Around each hut a mosaic had been laid using pieces of broken clay pots. Patterns were clearly visible on the remains of pots and on all the houses. The houses were beautifully built, the walls having a frame of wood covered in clay inside and out.

Some pots seemed to be used like colanders and when asked what they were used for Torek explained how they make a salt substitute. "We have no salt, so to make it we take calf's dung and burn it. The ash is put into this bowl with holes and then water is poured into the top. When the water has filtered through the ash it is laid out in the sun to dry. This is the only salt we have."

Two women were working among the ruins collecting firewood. They pulled apart one of the few walls of a hut that remained drunkenly upright, broke up the wood that was inside and then moved on to the next "house". Another woman was pounding grain in one of the rocky hollows of the stones that make up the hill.

The people of Lafon are reportedly keen to come back and rebuild. They have asked for temporary help until the harvest as they do not want to become dependent on food hand-outs. They have also requested some educational material as no books were salvaged from the fires earlier this year and they want to start teaching their children again.

Torek approached, smiling shyly and holding out an implement. "Do you know what this is?" he enquired, "Maybe a hoe?" I queried. "That's right, but not for using in the ground – it's a wedding hoe. When you see a girl you would like to marry you take this to her. If she accepts it, then you must go and see her father and agree on how many cows you must give him for his daughter. Today we have no cows so it is difficult for our sons and daughters to marry."

The people of Lafon are working hard and praying for a good harvest so that they can buy some cows, rebuild and provide a future for their children.

by Gillian Hazell

Gillian Hazell is a freelance film producer.

The opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily those of WFP.

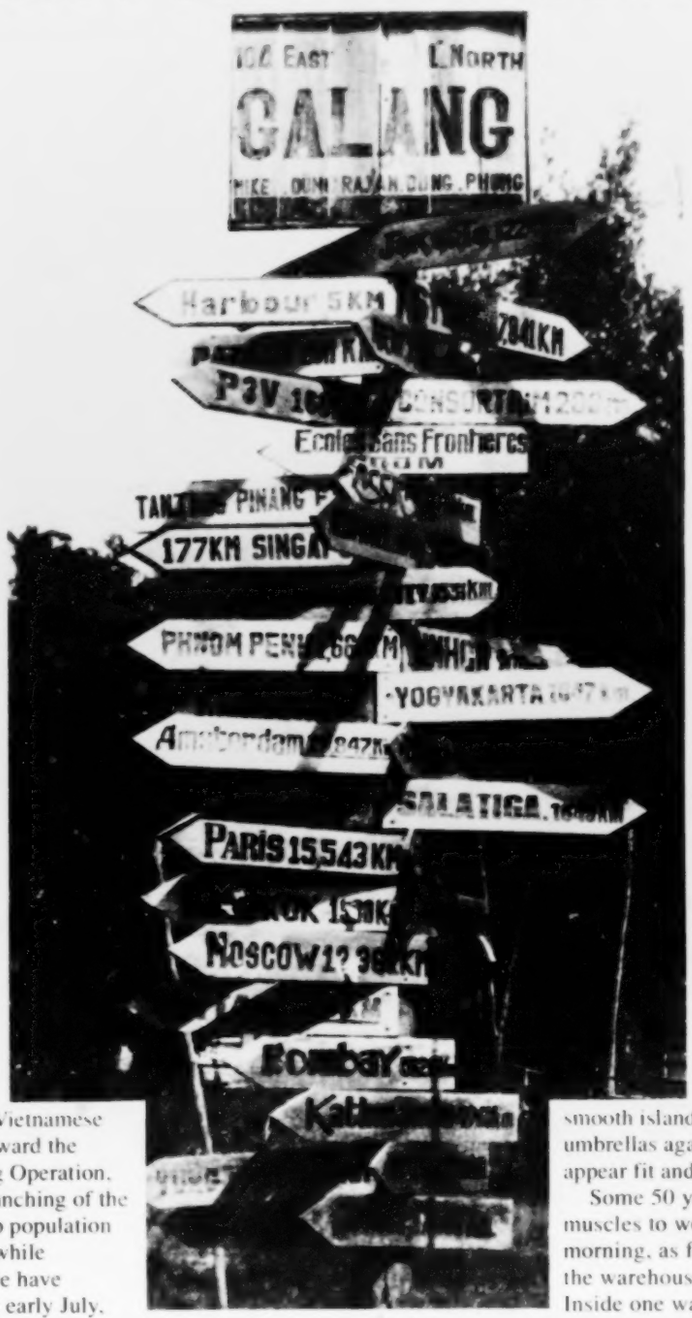
Indonesia

Camps for "boat people" start to wind down

From the shade of his makeshift shelter, 41-year-old Phan Van Tan calmly surveys the road. As a zone leader at the refugee camp on Galang Island, a remote speck in the Indonesian archipelago, he supervises the distribution of rice and other essential foods to families housed in the barracks nearby. At 11 a.m., a truck loaded with gunny sacks rumbles into view, right on time.

"Since the beginning the process has been very smooth," observes Mr Phan, who has been zone leader for more than three years. He is well prepared for the job, being a former logistics specialist in the Vietnamese army. Most of the other zone leaders are also former military men, proud of their role in keeping this fragile community together.

The discipline and community spirit of the Vietnamese have gone a long way toward the success of WFP's Galang Operation, which began with the launching of the camp in 1979. The camp population peaked at some 50,000, while altogether 125,000 people have landed up on Galang. By early July, resettlement and voluntary repatriation had reduced the number of asylum seekers and refugees to 12,772 – 2,235 are refugees and the majority are Vietnamese who have been denied asylum status. Some 555 Cambodians are also in the camp awaiting asylum.



WFP Joanne Lembo

From January 1993 to June 1994, WFP will spend US$1.7 million on rice, enriched noodles, vegetable oil, mung beans, soya beans, canned meat or fish, sugar and salt. The daily per capita ration adds up to 50 grammes of protein and 2,162 calories, exceeding the 1,900 calories recommended as a minimum requirement for emergency-affected populations.

Malnutrition is almost non-existent and the babies born nearly every day in the camp hospital are generally healthy. The Vietnamese, strolling along the smooth island roads, some holding umbrellas against the glare of the sun, appear fit and energetic.

Some 50 young men put their muscles to work every Tuesday morning, as food is transferred from the warehouse to the cooking pots. Inside one warehouse, a barefoot bare-chested young man leaps to the

top of the pile of gunny sacks, handing down the sacks of rice to be weighed by his compatriots. Another worker shouts in Vietnamese "103 kilos", jabbing the scale with his forefinger. This number includes the weight of the gunny sack, he duly points out. The sack is swiftly labelled with a blue marker then hoisted onto the bare shoulder of another volunteer worker, who staggers out to the truck. The whole process is supervised by UNHCR personnel, who assist WFP with on-the-ground operations. WFP monitors the programme from Jakarta, undertaking field visits as required.

The trucks, supplied through WFP's Non-food Items Unit, fan out to the food distribution points in the community, where the workers scoop four plastic mugs of rice – the weekly per capita ration – into outstretched plastic bags. One young man, his calf tattooed with a drawing of a horse, flashes a grin as he helps his neighbours take their fair share.

Mother of two, 33-year-old Nguyen Ngoc Ngan, says "the distribution system is very good because the people who serve are all volunteers and they serve with their hearts and their conscience."

However, disparities have emerged in the daily diet of the asylum seekers. Some are lucky enough to receive money from relatives already resettled in the US, Australia, Canada or other countries and can afford to buy fresh pork, apples, tuna fish, potatoes, beer and other items in the small shops run by both Vietnamese and Indonesians. Weekly shopping trips to Tanjung Pinang, a port 55 minutes away by ferry, have broadened access to a variety of goods. However, the majority of the refugees and asylum seekers must rely on WFP rations alone.

To supplement their meals and spend their time productively, a number of camp residents take part in the WFP-assisted food-for-work

WFP Joanne Lembo

Babies in the camp have their health regularly checked at this clinic. Those in need receive supplementary rations.

WFP Joanne Lembo

Although born in a refugee camp, this little boy has received good nutrition and health care.

programme where they are given rice rations in return for improving and maintaining camp sanitation by removing refuse and killing rats.

WFP's efforts to improve camp hygiene have paid off. Teams of sanitation workers worked wonders last year in scrubbing the barracks and keeping ditches garbage-free. There was also enthusiastic participation in a 1992 rice-for-rodents scheme, organized by the Indonesian Red Cross and refugee volunteers. Every rat tail – the mark of a murdered beast – was rewarded with grain. The original target of 10,000 tails was promptly met.

"The programme should be restored, because it's effective in preventing diseases," argues 27-year-old Zone Leader, Doen Van Nhat.

As more and more refugees choose to return home or are granted asylum, it is hoped that it will soon be possible to close the camp. This could prove a test case for other refugee camps around the region, which still house some 100,000 Vietnamese. The Indonesian Government is actively pursuing bilateral talks with the Vietnamese Government to resolve outstanding issues concerning voluntary repatriation, as well as seeking consensus among Southeast Asian neighbours over common solutions to the refugee problem.

Indonesia has mapped out an ambitious plan to develop industry and tourism on a cluster of 39 islands near Singapore, including Galang. The Government will spend US$90 million to construct six inter-island highways and a 54-kilometre road, providing the backbone of "BARELANG," the Indonesian acronym for this initiative.

Although the highway will not run through the camp, for security reasons the Government would like all the refugees resettled from Galang by June 1994, when construction should begin.

However, it will not be easy. Many of those who have been denied asylum status are determined not to leave until they are resettled in a third country. "They still hope and they still believe that someday, something will change," observes Father Adrian Padmaseputra, a Jesuit priest on Galang.

The psychological trauma that some refugees have undergone has strengthened their resolve to remain. They turn deaf ears to reports that Vietnam's economy is rapidly improving. The UNHCR and the Indonesian Government are trying hard to encourage voluntary repatriation.

"Psychologically, we encourage them to think that the best way is to go back to their country," says an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He emphasizes that his Government is not considering forced repatriation. "We can find another way."

Clearly, all parties wish to see a peaceful conclusion to this era of Vietnamese migration.

by Margot Cohen

Margot Cohen is a Jakarta-based journalist.

The opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily those of WFP.

Windward Islands

Don't put all your eggs in one basket!

Specialisation has been the route to economic success in the recent past for many. However, the time has come for a fresh look at personal and national survival strategies and diversification may be necessary in the future. This is particularly true of countries which rely on a few major export products, whether it be copper in Zambia, cloves in Zanzibar, tin in Malaysia, tea in Sri Lanka, coffee in Colombia and Brazil, or sugar and bananas in the Caribbean.

The four Caribbean Windward Islands of Dominica, Grenada, St Lucia and St Vincent are volcanic and far too mountainous to offer much scope for the production of sugar cane, but they have developed a thriving export in bananas. Bananas can be grown by smallholder farmers on land that sometimes is so steep that a visitor has to use banana stems as handholds to haul himself uphill. The way in which the banana growers cut and then carry the fruit on their heads to the nearest road is wondrous to see: balance, sure-footedness and physical endurance are all essential.

However, bananas grown in this way on two-hectare plots cannot compete in price with bananas grown on the vast lowland estates, of maybe 2,000 acres, in Central and South America. In addition, after years of guaranteed access for their fruit, first to Britain and then to the European Community, the Windwards face the prospect of increasing competition as Latin American producers demand equal rights of entry to the European Union. A new agreement gives the Caribbean producers continued preferential access but this is probably only a breathing space, a time for banana growers to diversify if they are to survive. But to diversify they need help. One valued source of assistance has been the World Food Programme.

Diversification does not necessarily mean abandoning your speciality but reducing your dependence on it. The Windwards will continue to export

WFP Michael Pickstock

A display of the variety of foods now available in the Windward Islands.

WFP Lauren Drewery

Doll Douglas grows vegetables as well as the more traditional crops as part of the agricultural diversification programme.

bananas but they are preparing to increase yields and improve the quality of their fruit. They are also developing production of other fruits, vegetables and processed food products, both for export and for the home market.

The fertile soils and good rainfall provide an ideal environment for growing a wide range of crops. The steeper slopes are best suited to tree crops, in order to avoid soil erosion, but pockets of flat land in valleys and along coasts can be cultivated for many vegetables, including root crops such as yam, sweet potato, taro and cassava, which are known locally as "ground provisions".

A dollar saved is a dollar earned

All the countries of the anglophone Caribbean are major importers of food, for which they have to pay in scarce foreign exchange. Increasing local food self-sufficiency in efficient ways could reduce substantially the level of imports and every dollar saved on imports would be as good as an extra dollar earned from exports. Additionally, most countries are striving to increase earnings from tourism, itself a diversification which provides further opportunities for local agricultural production.

In Dominica and Grenada, WFP has assisted by providing funds realized from the "monetization" of donated wheat. The wheat was sold to local flour millers and the cash used to help build training facilities, packing houses, jetties and fish-landing sites.

Converting theory to practice

One farmer in Grenada who has diversified very successfully is Mrs Edris Nixon. On her land in La Mode, she grows bananas, cocoa and nutmeg but now she also cultivates plantains, Jamaica and China plums, breadfruit, mandarins, sapodillas, soursops, grapefruit and mangoes. "I've just planted 150 paw paw as well," she says. "The Grenada Development Bank gave me a loan to diversify so now I'm putting all my efforts into growing different produce and hoping I'll make a living from it."

While Mrs Nixon is diversifying into fruit crops, another woman farmer, Mrs Doll Douglas, has taken on 6.5 acres of irrigated land on the Grenada Model Farms Estate to grow vegetables. This will reduce the Douglas family's dependence on their 10 acres of bananas, cocoa, nutmeg and grapefruit.

"We've benefited from extension advice," she says, "and the extension building is used not only by members of the Model Farms Estate but also by the local fishermen. As we step out of the meeting room, they step in." The extension building, like some others, was constructed with WFP assistance.

Sydney Law is a progressive farmer in the Mont Moritz Valley north of Grenada's capital, St George's. "We grow eddoes, interplanted with yams and corn, and pigeon peas. We also have a livestock enterprise: twelve cattle, including two bulls, which are fattened for beef," says Mr Law. He has benefited from WFP funds which were used to reduce the price of rodenticide to an affordable level.

"In the past I lost all my corn to rats," he remembers. "Many farmers cannot afford to buy rat poison but the bait we get from the Ministry of Agriculture, through the assistance of the World Food Programme, goes a long way to solving our problems. Baiting for rats is a must where corn and sweet potatoes are concerned," he concludes.

Developing the fishing industry offers another opportunity to diversify and improve food self-sufficiency. In Dominica, Omi Mittal, WFP Director of Operations for the Eastern Caribbean, describes the significance of WFP assistance to the fishing communities. A concrete ramp has been built with local labour and WFP paid for the cement. A floating landing stage allows for safe boat handling through more months of the year and it can be dismantled and brought ashore when storms are forecast. In addition, WFP paid for a workshop and lockers at the landing site.

"The workshop is a most important activity at these landing sites," observes Mr Mittal, who has been in the Eastern Caribbean for nearly five years and is familiar with the challenges fishermen and farmers face. "The workshop means that boats and engines can be repaired on site without delay," he continues. "Equipment and workshop tools are provided and some fishermen are trained as mechanics."

A fisherman at St Sauveur, Felix Burrough, says, "Now we can store our engine and gear right here, in our lockers, instead of carrying it all from the bay to our homes. It saves us a lot of time and effort."

Carbon Winston, a Dominican Extension Worker, explains the benefits brought by improving the feeder roads. "Prior to this road being improved, bananas were badly damaged and bruised on their way to the port. But now the road is sealed the quality of the bananas continues to improve."

Banana grower Felix Christmas is emotionally grateful, even though unsure of how funds were acquired to improve access to his farm. "I am thankful by the grace of God for this road," he says. "Before we had it really tough here. The truck would sometimes be a mile and a half from the bananas and sometimes our production would sit there and rot. Now, because of the road, we can cut bananas any time. Whoever found the money, I pray God will bless them and they will have more money to help others."

Over generations the people of the Caribbean have suffered many disappointments from colonial neglect, economic mismanagement, ill-advised aid projects and hurricane damage. Now they are faced with the economic nightmare of losing markets for their traditional exports. Undoubtedly they will have to strive to survive but there is ample evidence of energetic and innovative people willing "to give it a go".

The Hon. Nicholas Braithwaite, Prime Minister of Grenada, recognises opportunities. "Unless we can supply local market demands our supermarkets are going to continue to import goods," he says. "But I feel confident that with the development of two agro-industrial plants, we will find more of our local products on the shelves of our supermarkets."

Dame Eugenia Charles, Prime Minister of Dominica, stresses a need for commitment, "A lot of people think there is no need for grind but you can't get anywhere without really knuckling down and getting things done."

In the end, the people of the Caribbean in general, and the Windwards in particular, will decide their future. If they want to strive and diversify there are plenty of role models in their own communities from whom they can take inspiration.

by Michael Pickstock

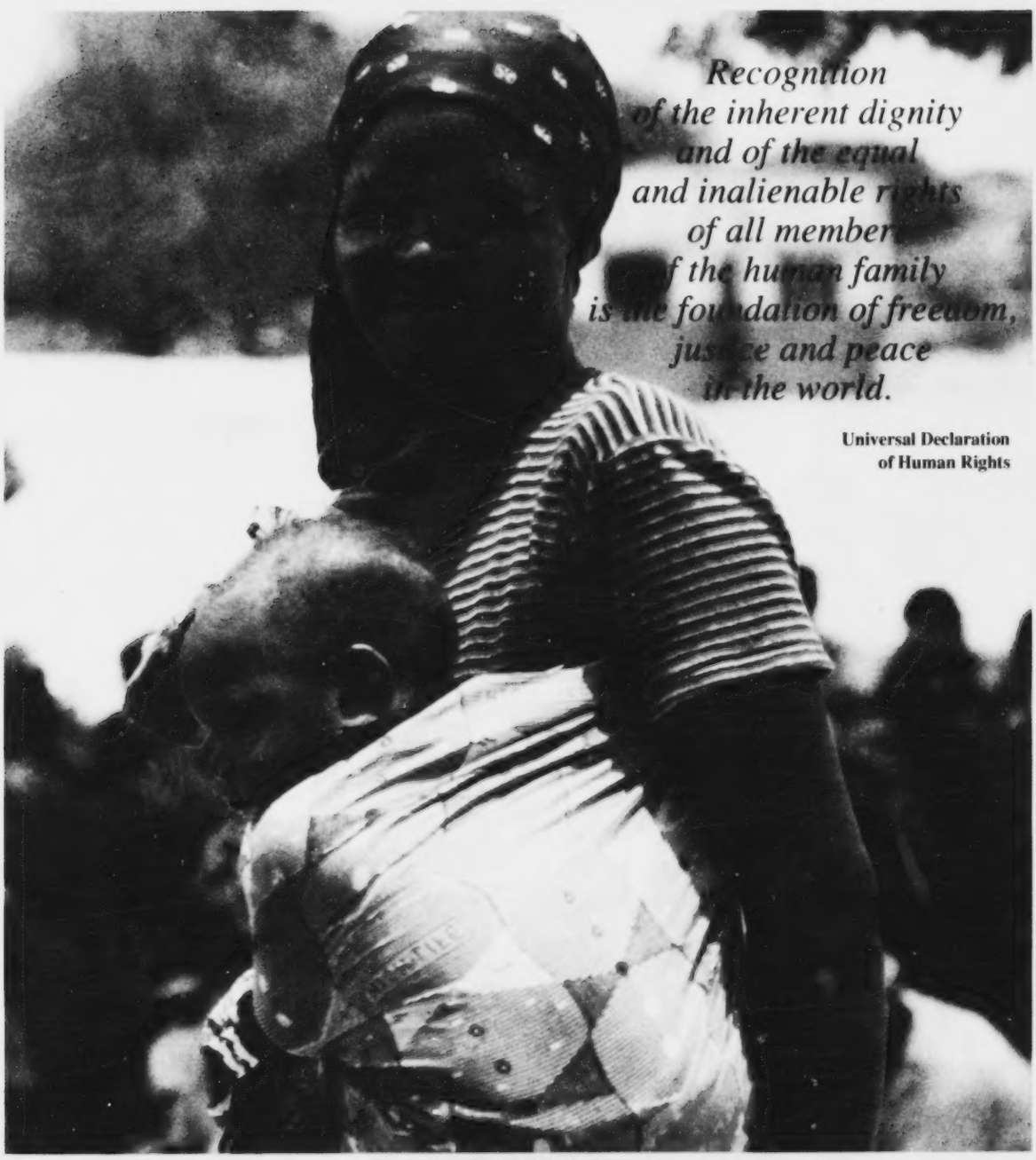
WFP Lauren Drewery

A Dominican fisherman takes home newly caught dolphin fish for dinner. Some of the catch is used to provide meals at the primary school shown in the background.

Michael Pickstock is a British journalist and radio producer.

The opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily those of WFP.

Human Rights


Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

WFP/Mercedes Sayagués

Article 1
All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

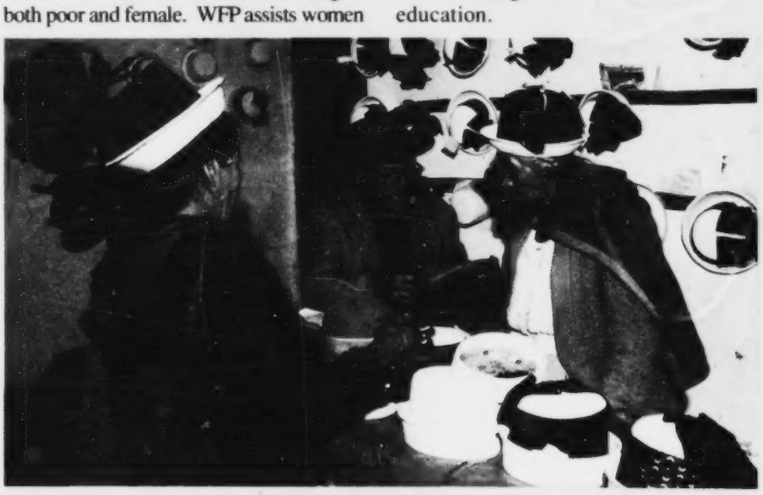
WFP/Jeanette Van Acker

The poor usually have the most difficulty in claiming their human rights. Through food-for-work projects, WFP enables this often neglected section of society to maintain themselves and their families while at the same time supporting development to improve their future lives and help them to take their place in society. Particular attention is paid to the most vulnerable groups: children, women, the sick and indigenous peoples, ensuring that they are not left behind by development.

In most cultures women traditionally have fewer rights than men and poor women have the double burden of being both poor and female. WFP assists women in many ways. Food rations help them feed their families and women benefit from the advantages that development brings, such as improving agriculture and providing sources of fuel and water. While encouraging development, the Programme is careful to ensure that projects really benefit women and do not just add an extra burden to their lives.

In many countries cooperatives have been formed with WFP assistance, enabling women to make the most of their abilities, earn extra income and gain in self-confidence.

In addition, providing food rations to health clinics, schools and training centres has improved women's health and encouraged them to receive an education.



WFP/Jeanette Van Acker

Article 14 (1)
Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution...

WFP/Lars Bjorkman

Civil strife has now supplanted natural disaster as the main reason for the large-scale exodus of millions of people from their homes. In 1992, WFP provided food relief for 14 million refugees and displaced people, ensuring their survival until they can return home.

WFP is at the forefront of the effort to ensure the right of access to food of those cut off from humanitarian assistance by fighting. In situations where feuding sides have the potential to use food as a weapon, WFP has negotiated "corridors of tranquillity", enabling food to be delivered to people on both sides of a conflict.

WFP/Sarah Errington

Article 23
Everyone has the right to work ...

Unemployment is a growing problem in both the developed and developing world. WFP food-for-work projects provide employment for millions of people. Providing the poor with jobs enables them to feed their families, raises incomes, and increases access to health care and education. At the same time, dignity and self-respect are restored as the unemployed become working members of society with a greater say in their own future.

WFP/Giuseppe Bizzarri

WFP/Diane Weathers

WFP/Philippe Borel

Article 25 (1)
Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care, and necessary social services ...

WFP/Philippe Borel

Few would disagree that the most basic human right is that of survival – sufficient food to sustain healthy life. As WFP's Executive Director, Catherine Bertini, has pointed out, "Freedom means little to those who are without the basic means of sustenance."

Through its projects and emergency operations WFP provides food for millions of people yearly, ensuring their survival and improving health. The living conditions of the poor are improved by using food-for-work projects to build clinics, community centres and improved housing, while food rations supplied to hospitals and health-care centres help speed recovery and encourage attendance at health clinics. In addition, supplying food rations to health-care workers, as part of their wages, enables governments to increase recruitment.

WFP/Daniele Pellegrini

WFP/Mercedes Sayagués

Article 25 (2)
Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance....

Pregnant women, babies and young children are particularly susceptible to malnutrition and illness. By distributing food rations through mother-and-child clinics, WFP helps women to improve their diet during pregnancy, promotes breast-feeding and encourages women to attend centres with their children so that they can both receive regular health checks and vaccinations.

WFP/Mercedes Sayagués

Article 26 (1)
Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.

The lack of an educated population is one of the biggest drawbacks to development. In 1990, 130 million children lacked access to primary schools, the majority female. Of the world's estimated 948 million illiterate adults, two-thirds are women.

Providing children with free school meals encourages parents to send both girls and boys to school and improves children's ability to concentrate during lessons. WFP also promotes adult education by supplying food rations to training centres.

Single-sex schools and schools close to villages can be a decisive factor in a parent's decision to send children – particularly girls – to school. WFP helps by supporting projects to build schools and other community buildings.

WFP/Fiona McDougall

WFP/Fiona McDougall

WFP/Cristiano Laruffa

Article 28
Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Human rights, democracy and development can not be separated. The UN maintains that all human rights are indivisible and interdependent, and the full enjoyment of one depends on the realization of the others.

In the past thirty years, all WFP projects have had the same aim: to help the poor, the vulnerable and the oppressed to improve their standard of living by providing them with food and work, improving education and health services, and encouraging economic development. As the UN General Assembly stated in 1991 "extreme poverty is a violation of human dignity, a threat to the right to life and a condition that prevents the most vulnerable groups from exercising their human rights".

by Diana Dixon

Relying on each other's strengths

Months before most of the world realized the full scope of the tragedy in Somalia, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) were already working together to provide humanitarian relief to those displaced by the armed conflict and drought. As early as March 1992, a convoy led by a joint WFP/UNICEF team crossed the front lines from south to north Mogadishu and delivered thousands of tons of emergency supplies to internally displaced people.

"It was truly a breakthrough," recalls Peter McDermott, then UNICEF Emergency Officer in Somalia. "Not only was this the first major shipment to reach the neediest people in Somalia, but an informal corridor of safe passage was created in its wake, allowing access to daily relief convoys."

Crises such as the one in Somalia flare up with disturbing frequency in the post cold-war period. To cope with ever more complex emergencies, United Nations agencies have learned, by necessity, to take advantage of the benefits of cooperating with one another in the field. More and more often, WFP and UNICEF are working in tandem at the forefront of relief efforts.

Founded in 1946 to help children in the aftermath of World War II, UNICEF continues to provide emergency assistance, although its mandate has been broadened to include long-term human development. In 1992, 22 per cent of its overall budget was allocated to emergency humanitarian relief, the highest percentage since the immediate post World War II period. In comparison, WFP allocates about two-thirds of its resources to such assistance. According to Hans Narula, UNICEF Director of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF participation in emergency relief is likely to increase. At the moment the two agencies are cooperating in more than 10 major emergencies around the globe, including the Horn of Africa and former Yugoslavia.

The complementary relationship between WFP and UNICEF is perhaps most obvious during the most urgent phase of an emergency. WFP provides food assistance and UNICEF provides non-food items – anything from medicines and vaccines to tarpaulins and well-drilling equipment. The importance of this sort of non-food relief is often overlooked by those unfamiliar with relief work; a secure food supply is crucial in a severe disaster but so are the basic requirements of health and shelter.

The two agencies often support each other logistically, sharing cargo planes and trucks to deliver relief supplies. For instance, in Operation Lifeline Sudan, WFP uses its logistics expertise to coordinate all passenger and cargo aircraft. Each day an average of ten aircraft airlift and airdrop WFP food, UNICEF supplies and NGO goods from northern Kenya

WFP/Paul Mitchell

Somalian children eat their supplementary rations at a camp for displaced people.

UNICEF

UNICEF, the only United Nations agency devoted exclusively to children, promotes the survival, protection and growth of the young, especially the most vulnerable among them, through health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation, and other sustainable, community-based programmes. Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1946, to help children in war-torn Europe, UNICEF now concentrates on bringing about long-term human development. It continues to help save and protect lives by emergency relief assistance.

A prime-mover behind the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, it advocates vigorously for the universal ratification and full implementation of this charter, which has now been ratified by 148 countries.

UNICEF organized a World Summit for Children in September 1990, attended by representatives from over 152 countries, including 71 Heads of State or Government. The Summit adopted a set of goals to be achieved by the year 2000: reduction of infant and child mortality rates by a third; halving of maternal mortality rates; halving of malnutrition; universal access to safe drinking water and to basic education; reduction of adult illiteracy rates; and improving protection for children in especially difficult circumstances. Some of these goals have been chosen for accelerated achievement by 1995. UNICEF is helping governments develop and implement 10-year National Programmes of Action (NPAs) to meet these goals.

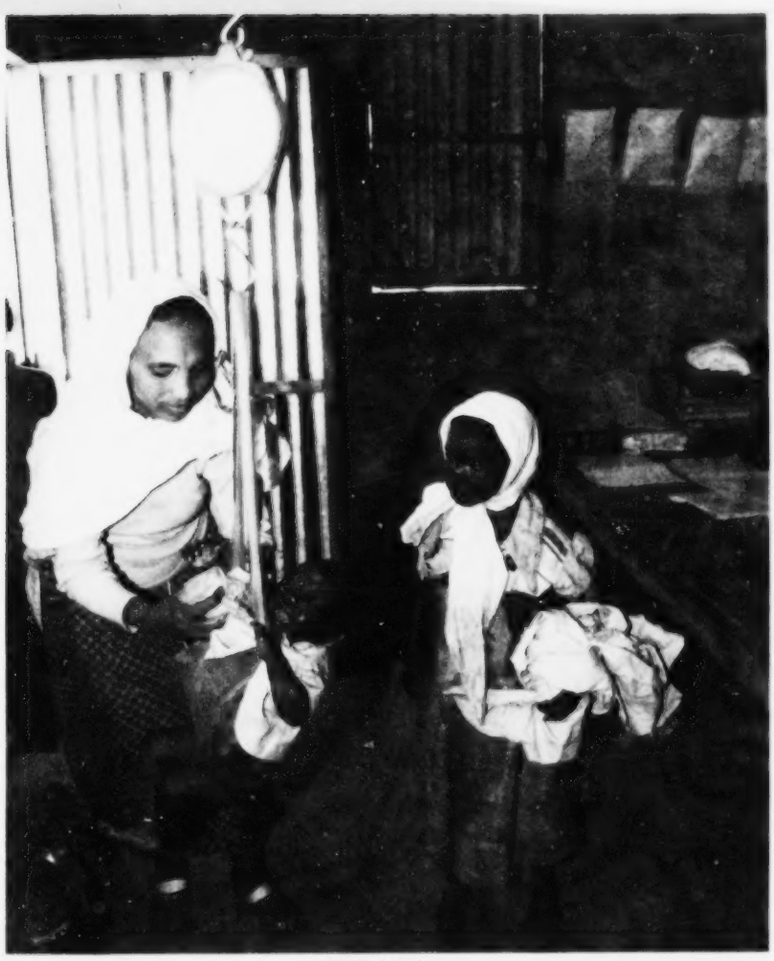
UNICEF country programmes are formulated in consultation with Governments for multi-year periods. They encompass cooperation with government agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations and people from all sectors of society, including community leaders, teachers, parents and children themselves. Currently, UNICEF cooperates in programmes in 137 countries.

into southern Sudan. Says Jean Luc Siblot, WFP Emergency Coordinator, "The cooperation extends even beyond logistics. In southern Sudan, WFP and UNICEF conduct joint assessments and programmes to obtain maximum food security in the year, and in a seed-swap programme WFP offers food to villagers in exchange for local seeds, which UNICEF then redistributes.

Such common sense logistical support is working not just in the Sudan, but also in Angola, Somalia, Ethiopia and other African states.

Cooperation often is merely a matter of helping one another identify needs and does not have to amount to either agency taking the lead, stresses Mr Narula. If UNICEF happens to be in a disaster area first, it can alert WFP to the food problem. By the same token, WFP may discover that there is a need for widespread immunization of children in a particular region and pass this information on to UNICEF. In short, each agency contributes its particular expertise to the greater effectiveness of the entire relief effort. Without an intimate knowledge of each other's capabilities, this degree of cooperation could never take place. This close cooperation is more than some sort of Utopian ideal, it is based on years of experience on the front lines of emergency relief.

WFP/UNICEF cooperation reaches far beyond initial disaster relief. Emergency situations become stabilized and other areas require rehabilitative rather than emergency assistance. Such cooperation includes the rebuilding of hospitals, schools and other basic facilities. These activities may not be as dramatic as running a relief convoy into a war-torn area, but the results are just as impressive and also longer lasting.



UNICEF John Isaac

Monitoring a child's weight at a feeding centre in Ethiopia. Young children need need both sufficient food and health care if they are to develop correctly.

Sometimes, particularly in non-emergency situations, the cooperation between WFP and UNICEF is indirect and felt only at the community level. In a chronically depressed area, such as the Guatemalan highlands, WFP runs a food-for-work programme to support cooperative farms. At the same time, UNICEF operates a literacy programme for indigenous women. At the individual level, the projects are distinct, but they are operating with the same overall objective for the community – the alleviation of poverty.

Often, however, UNICEF and WFP combine their emergency relief and rehabilitation, and development expertise within the same region, or indeed within the same community. The reason for this is clear – emergency situations are neither static nor unidimensional; over time, development work is needed in order to make individual communities self-sufficient. It is important to keep chronically depressed areas from deteriorating into fully fledged emergencies. The situation in the drought- and conflict-stricken area of southern Sudan illustrates this point. In one community, children may be in danger of starving; here, WFP and UNICEF cooperate to bring in food rations as quickly as possible for young people. Just a few kilometres away, another tiny village is more concerned with rebuilding a hospital; in this case, WFP runs a food-for-work programme that encourages residents to rebuild the hospital, while UNICEF provides health professionals and medical supplies.

The two agencies are cooperating in many innovative projects. In Afghanistan, for example, UNICEF often provides primary health care in areas without any medical infrastructure. This assistance usually involves supplementary feeding in areas where food-supply lines have been broken. Supplementary feeding programmes are designed to meet the special nutritional needs of children and pregnant women.

Raymond Janssens, UNICEF Programme Officer for Afghanistan and north Pakistan, describes a typical scenario: in the town of Herat, WFP supplements the diets of over 2,000 vulnerable people with high-protein biscuits and corn-soya milk mixtures. "The objectives of UNICEF and WFP are literally blurred, as food in this case becomes as critical as medicine," says Mr Janssens. "The food items are supplied by WFP, but the programme itself is administered by UNICEF."

Joint action by WFP and UNICEF alleviated another problem in Herat. "Only a year ago," continues Mr Janssens, "the town was gripped by a severe sanitation crisis. Running water was minimal and clean water even more scarce. UNICEF offered its technical expertise and recommendations, and WFP put people to work on the clean-water project with a food-for-work programme." Thanks to the efforts of both organizations the town now has clean drinking water.

UNICEF and WFP are leading the way in building links among agencies. As the entire United Nations system moves towards increased interagency cooperation, WFP and UNICEF have defined cooperation based on necessity, not convenience. UNICEF Executive Director, James P. Grant, remarks: "As crises become more complex worldwide, it has become increasingly important to make use of the special and complementary strengths of different agencies: the close cooperation between WFP and UNICEF is a good example."

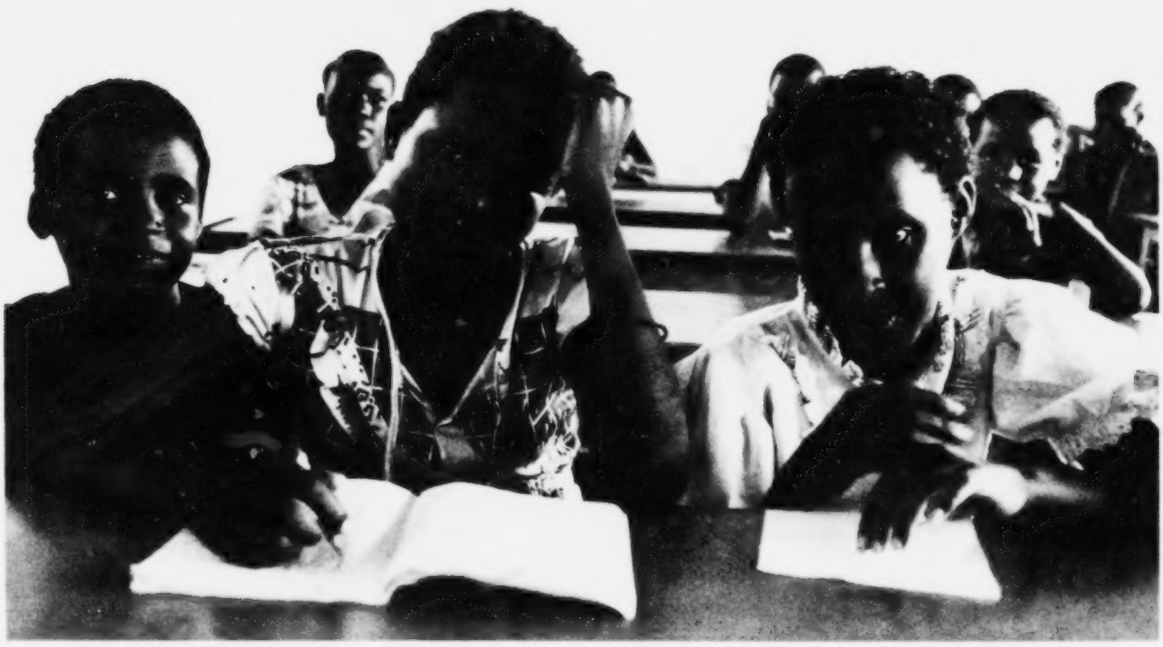
by Bradley J. Busetto

Bradley J. Busetto is a freelance journalist.

The opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily those of WFP.

Kenya

Turkana schoolchildren score high



WFP Paul Mitchell

Brightly coloured plastic bowls brim with maize and beans. For many children who live in the arid and semi-arid lands of Kenya, a meal at school may be their only food until the following day. According to World Bank estimates, more than 20 per cent of rural households in these areas cannot even afford a minimally adequate diet.

Because of this, the World Food Programme, together with the Ministry of Education, started a school-feeding project in Kenya in 1981. The current phase of the project costs US$28.7 million and provides a school meal each day to 491,000 children in 23 districts.

"The idea is that by offering a free meal, parents will feel encouraged to enrol their children in primary schools. This is a real incentive, particularly for nomadic pastoralists," explains Tom Ochieng, the WFP Programme Assistant responsible for the project.

"Frankly speaking," says Alex Muindi, a Ministry of Education Officer for the school-feeding project, "school feeding has almost reached the point of becoming a necessity, especially when drought strikes. I remember that in late 1991 and mid 1992 we had to continue feeding children throughout the Easter and August holidays. The schools turned into feeding centres. There was a great fear that if we didn't feed the young ones, we wouldn't have a Standard 1 the following year and enrolment would have been very low, particularly in most arid districts."

Happily, enrolment figures in Turkana, one of the most vulnerable areas, have risen consistently over the last few years, as have the results of the Kenya Certificate of Education.

"In 1992, for the very first time, primary-school children from the Turkana District took the lead academically in the nation," says Esther Ouma, another Education Officer responsible for the school-feeding project.

When asked about the correlation between learning on a full stomach and educational achievement, Esther Ouma responded, "This question is always a difficult one to answer. Without a doubt, school meals help children perform better since they can concentrate on their lessons. Offering a meal also encourages regular attendance. Underlying it all, however, are the education staff whose deep commitment makes a direct difference."

Relative security in the Turkana District is also a major factor contributing to regular attendance and good performance, adds Alex Muindi.

"Compared to the escalating insecurity in northeastern Kenya, Turkana has remained calm. A school term can be greatly disrupted when schools have to temporarily close down because of insecurity."

According to Tom Ochieng, WFP's school-feeding project in Turkana is one of the Programme's best organized. "The Turkana District Education Officer, Mr Cherongis, takes a personal interest in the success of the programme. Families in the community are also keen to ensure that their children receive a meal at school."

The many NGOs operating in Turkana have also helped to boost educational standards and to assist in opening numerous boarding schools. When nomadic parents have to move on with their camels, cattle and goats, boarding schools care for children left behind to study.

WFP Paul Mitchell

Lunch time – bowls being distributed so that lunch can be served.

Boarding schools are the backbone of the school system, especially in the arid-land areas. Pastoralist parents often graze their camels in a 50-kilometre radius. If the children came home instead of boarding, often they would find no one there.

Improving and expanding boarding facilities in Kenya to boost enrolment is a priority, especially for girl pupils. WFP currently supports 80 low-cost boarding schools in Kenya, which are attended by about 17,000 students.

It is not unusual for a visitor to a boarding school to be shown an open-air enclosure which serves as a dormitory. Looking at the sleeping mats rolled up or scattered under a tree within the enclosure one is always tempted to ask, "What do the children do when it rains – where do they go?" The answer is sure to be, "It never rains in this area!"

The provision of some facilities is the responsibility of the parents. However, due to the general poverty in these areas, the parents' contribution is minimal, resulting in inadequate and poorly equipped boarding facilities which discourage enrolment.

By providing food to the boarding pupils WFP enables the Government to make budgetary savings on its expenditure on the schools. The savings are then ploughed back into the boarding schools to build or improve new dormitories, build ventilated pit latrines, and purchase beds, mattresses and kitchenware.

It is hoped that the improved boarding facilities will reassure parents that their children, especially the girls, are taken good care of while they are away from home.

by Brenda Barton

Brenda Barton is the WFP Regional Information Officer in Nairobi.

Peace agreement signed

For much of this year, every aspect of life in Rwanda was on hold. "Maybe after the peace agreement," people would say, or "not unless the peace agreement is signed soon." No plans could be made and nothing could be taken for granted until the Government and the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) agreed to end nearly three years of civil war.

On 4 August, after numerous postponements, the two sides signed a peace accord in Arusha, Tanzania. Under the terms of the treaty, the rebels would join an enlarged transitional Government alongside President Habyarimana's National Republic Movement for Democracy and the four opposition parties. At last there was cause for celebration.

For Veronique Ntakababaje and her family, the signing of the accord meant they could at last think of going home. In June 1992 they became displaced after the RPF moved into their farming community on the Rwanda/Uganda border. Many, including Veronique's husband, were killed. Her brother was captured and she has not seen him since.

Homeless and destitute, Veronique and her eight children moved from one camp for displaced people to another. Following a massive rebel offensive last February, they were once again uprooted. They ended up living in a hut covered with banana and eucalyptus leaves in the Nyacyonga Camp on a hillside 20 kilometres from Kigali, the Rwandan capital.

WFP David Orr

Veronique Ntakababaje with one of her children.

In July, there were 900,000 displaced people living in 29 camps in Rwanda. Since being driven from their homes by the war, they have been totally dependant on outside relief assistance for their survival. Despite Oxfam's emergency water and sanitation scheme, and a health programme run by Medecins sans frontières, disease was rife, with malaria counting for the greatest number of deaths. A UNICEF survey in March 1993 estimated that 12 per cent of children under five were malnourished.

From Veronique's hut, you can see the food distribution point with the white, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) trucks parked by the roadside. Sacks of WFP maize and beans are unloaded and stacked in a pile. A cordon of armed guards keep people at an orderly distance while one person at a time advances to be served their allocation.

WFP has been the biggest provider of food aid to the displaced, organising three emergency projects since last year. The first was valued at US$3.3 million, the second at US$12.4 million, plus a budget revision at US$17.9 million, while the third, instituted in June of this year, was worth US$40.1 million.

Such was the amount of food being distributed – 12,000 to 13,000 tonnes per month – that Walter Stocker of the ICRC, when interviewed in Kigali in July, described the Rwandan operation as "the biggest humanitarian operation in Africa today".

WFP David Orr

Loading grain for Rwanda onto a WFP-chartered plane at Entebbe in Uganda.

Until July, WFP was delivering food to Rwanda by a variety of means: by road from Uganda through Tanzania, a combination of road and rail from Dar-es-Salaam, and airlift from Entebbe to Kigali. In the first six months of the year, the Programme delivered more than 52,000 tonnes of food, over 26,000 tonnes of which were airlifted and the rest delivered by truck from Uganda or by road and rail from Dar-es-Salaam.

The airlift was introduced due to the closure of the Rwanda/Uganda border following the rebels' February offensive. It was, in the words of Joseph Kabore, WFP's Director of Operations in Rwanda, "one of the most important airlifts in Africa this year". Between late February and the second week in July, WFP flew over 600 missions between Entebbe and Kigali, reaching a peak of eight per day during the month of May.

Rwanda is a mountainous, landlocked little country, about the same size as Wales or Belgium. Its population density, of nearly 300 people per square kilometre, is the highest in Africa.

It is also one of the world's poorer countries with 95 per cent of the population barely managing to survive on their *shambas*, small lots of two or three acres. Even with complex terracing techniques, its eight million people are living above the carrying capacity of the land.

This places great pressure on existing arable land and creates a constant demand for more. Other natural resources are equally threatened. In some areas, notably in the vicinity of the camps for displaced people, whole forests have been hacked down to provide firewood. The war has had a drastic effect on Rwanda's food producing capacity. Worst affected has been the north of the country, the region with the richest agricultural land.

The RPF first moved into Rwanda from their bases in Uganda in October 1990. By last summer, they had established control over some 900 square kilometres of northern Rwanda. As they advanced further southwards in February 1993, a massive population displacement took place. In March, the rebels agreed to retreat to the positions they had held prior to their February offensive. Thus a demilitarized *zone tampon* – buffer zone – was established, patrolled by a small force from the Organization of African Unity.

An estimated 80 per cent of the population has returned to the *zone tampon*. However, with Government infrastructure and local services disrupted, life is far from normal. In the absence of health clinics and markets, people continue to be largely dependent on outside aid.

The signing of the peace accord in early August means that Rwanda can once again look towards the future. Reconstruction will not be easy but at last a start can be made.

by David Orr

David Orr is an Irish freelance foreign correspondent based in London.

The opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily those of WFP.

India

Puppets get the message across

In the far-flung dusty hamlets of India's desert state of Rajasthan, a family planning film is enthralling villagers. The women especially are charmed by Mangli, a puppet who plays the role of an 18-year-old village girl who dares to defy her husband and her in-laws by refusing to have a baby as she feels she is too young.

Jaag uthi Kathuputli, The Puppet Awakens, was made by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and WFP. It borrows from folk theatre and explains in the local dialect the advantages of family planning and having small families.

The film, the first venture of its kind by international agencies to check the country's seemingly unstoppable baby boom, is being taken from village to village in a region where fertility levels are among the highest in India.

India's present population of about 883 million is growing by more than two per cent annually. This, warn experts, will make India the world's most populous country by the year 2035, nullifying Government efforts to improve the living standards of the country's poor.

Planners are belatedly realizing that motivation and not just birth-control devices is the key to averting this demographic nightmare. Initial evaluations show that the film is right on target. So far it has been shown to villagers working on WFP-assisted reforestation schemes at food-distribution centres in Banswara. All the women interviewed by UNFPA evaluators after the film said they should have the right to choose the size of their families and when to have a child.

"If it works in southern Rajasthan then we could consider making similar films for other WFP projects in India," said Project Officer Kenneth Noah Davies, now WFP's Director of Operations in Swaziland. "As part of the communication effort, people would also be directed to family planning services," he adds.

India's four-decade-old family-planning programme is south Asia's oldest. While officials have been able to reduce the average family size from six children to four, the "small family" message has still to reach millions of illiterate men and women.

A recent report of the US Population Crisis Committee (PCC) observes that India's goal of zero population growth by 2050 is over ambitious. At present, only 43 per cent of the over 140 million couples in the reproductive age group use contraceptives. Even this is far from satisfactory as women comprise the bulk of contraceptive users.

Pointing to "serious shortcomings" in the programme, the PCC says that without greater political commitment and increased funding, it will not be possible to arrest the runaway demographic growth.

However, according to a leading demographist, Ashish Bose, politicians should be kept out of family planning since it is a socio-medical and not a political problem. "Illiteracy is the biggest obstacle to India's birth control goals," he says. He cites the example of Kerala, India's southern state, where literacy levels are among the highest in the country and the birth rate one of the lowest.

The 1991 census revealed that while almost 40 per cent of Indian women can read and write, only 25 per cent are literate in rural India. In Rajasthan's villages only nine per cent are literate. In these areas the puppet shows are an invaluable method of spreading the message that "small is best".

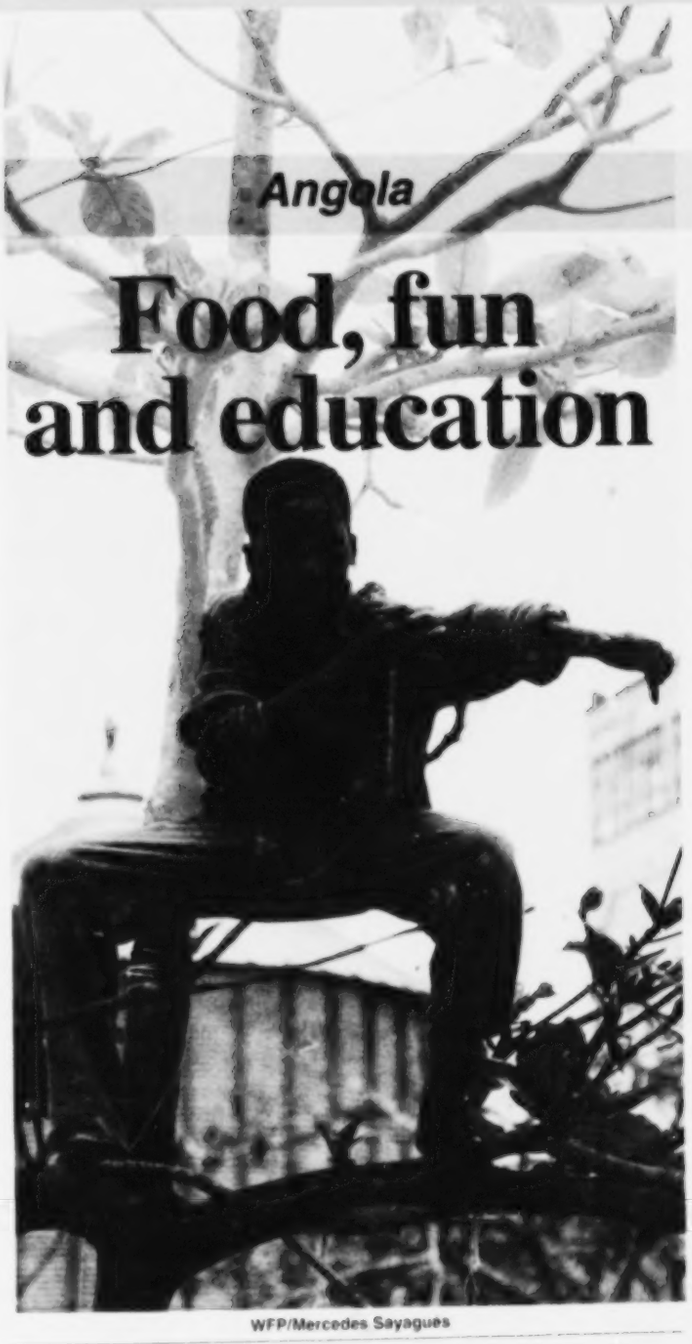
by Mahesh Uniyal

Mahesh Uniyal is a journalist with the International Press Service.

The opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily those of WFP.

Angola

Food, fun and education



WFP/Mercedes Sayagues

It was just a game, but with a small toy for a prize and an aura of competition in the air, the children took it seriously. Little Clalia stood facing the classroom, clutching the paper in her hand, trying to read the word inscribed there. "Angola!" she read, smiling proudly as she recognized the name of her country.

Clalia advanced her team's car-shaped marker along the road drawn on the blackboard, towards the sign that says "Luanda", the car's destination. One by one the students approached, hoping to move their car ahead by reading words, hoping not only to win the game, but also to learn to read.

A friendly face appeared at the door: "Form for lunch" said one of the older students. The class quickly gathered up their things and headed out into the hot courtyard. They stood in a neat line, hoping to be among the first chosen to enter the cafeteria for the daily lunch of rice, beans and possibly fish, supplied by WFP and prepared in the school's kitchen. Only months before, these children received few dependable meals, had no hope of attending school and never dreamed an American volunteer would travel so far just to teach them.

With an interest in the region but no background in development, I had come to Angola under a six-month volunteer programme offered by the Danish NGO, Development Aid from People to People (DAPP). During my work as a teacher in the DAPP Street Children's School in Luanda, Angola's capital, I observed this small organization make a significant impact on the lives of people in need, in part due to the provision of WFP food.

A full day of activities

Over 100 children walk each day, through narrow alleyways and along garbage-strewn roads, to arrive at the brightly painted Street Children's School. Most Angolan schools squeeze up to this many children into one classroom for a few hours of lessons, but DAPP divides the students into small classes and involves them in a whole day of programmes.

Recognizing the importance of the children's complete development, DAPP teachers supplement the Government-defined academic curriculum with learning games, vocational programmes of agriculture and construction-related trades. Local experts and celebrities, such as karate instructors and musicians, also come to prepare the students for special events such as a mini-olympics and a student-run music concert. The school can only sustain this many activities by cooperating with other organizations working in Luanda, including the provincial government, the Ministry of Agriculture and WFP.

WFP began delivering food to the Street Children's School in July 1992, providing 120 children with daily breakfast and lunch, and encouraging them to stay at school the whole day. When the first shipment of food arrived in the new year, dozens of excited students went to the port to watch enormous trucks pull up to the loading dock carrying sacks of rice, corn meal, soya beans and cases of cooking oil. The stronger boys helped

unload the shipment and slowly the cavernous warehouse filled with the heavy bags and boxes, all labelled with the names of donor countries.

Angola's food aid needs have grown over the past year. After the elections in late 1992, the civil war renewed intensely, especially in the provincial capitals, forcing the dislocation of tens of thousands of people from their homes and farms. The unstable military situation outside Luanda obstructs regular food deliveries to the provinces.

Naturally, the children suffer the most. Angola has the highest under-five mortality rate in the world according to UNICEF. Our project targeted its efforts toward the children who escaped from the provinces to Luanda, only to discover a lack of security and education once they arrived.

Fortunately, most Angolan street children have homes but some lack attention, affection and love, so they seek any opportunity for human contact. They roam the dusty neighbourhoods, prowl through the markets trying to sell odd items for spare change, or simply sit all day gazing at the grey walls that surround them. Many are victims of war.

Some of their fathers disappeared to join the army years ago and have never returned. Others say their mothers stayed behind in the village when the family came to the city and rebels have since attacked their farms. A few of the children have lost both parents and live with an aunt or older brother, who treat them more like a tenant than a close relative. Not only does the DAPP school educate them, but it also gives their lives some structure, shows them the love and attention they deserve, and helps them develop normally.

Started by a Danish teacher's cooperative in 1977, DAPP currently runs well over 100 community-orientated small-scale development projects throughout southern Africa. Alongside the Street Children's School in Luanda, DAPP also operates a family health education project, catering service, clothing factory and construction company. A school and plantation in nearby Caxito, and a new tree-planting project in the Namibe desert region of southern Angola are the only other projects currently running. Projects in other regions, including a farm, school and community health programme in the central highland city of Huambo, halted abruptly in October 1992 when the civil war resurfaced.

At that time, food supplies at the Street Children's School fell victim to the same looting that ransacked other parts of Luanda during three days of street fighting and rioting. Until a new shipment arrived, activity at the school slowed down considerably.

"I can't study, I can't work and I don't want to play football," the children would say in their carefully orchestrated whines, "because I'm hungry." By early afternoon, the school's usually bustling courtyard resembled an abandoned parking lot, as one by one the kids drifted off toward their homes or into the markets nearby. No lunch, no school.

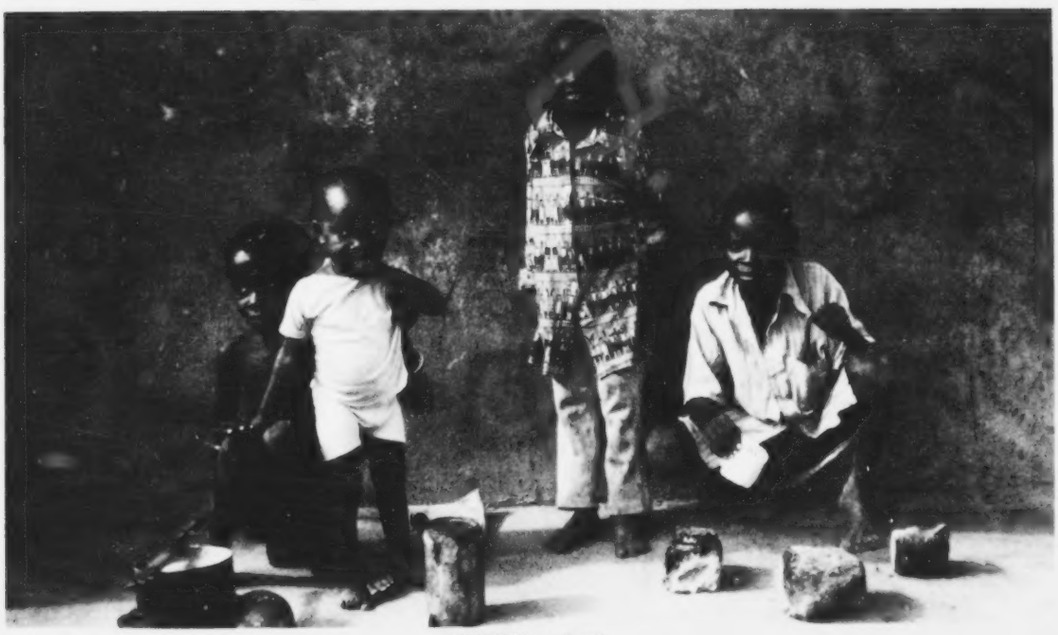
Schedule centres on food

Today, food once again provides the structure for the day. First thing in the morning, the children divide into their groups; half go into the classrooms while the other half spread out among the campus for various vocational classes or to work on the cleaning and maintenance of the school. They switch places at breakfast time, when everyone gathers for a bowl of hot soya meal or a piece of bread. Throughout the morning, three Angolan cooks work in the kitchen to prepare lunch. The whole school gathers after the two class periods to dig into big piles of rice and beans or some other combination of WFP donations, often supplemented with locally purchased vegetables, meat or fish.

Now that a full lunch is available every day, an energetic host of smiling faces remains for the afternoon sport and culture activities. Sometimes a teacher emerges right after lunch with a whistle and a football. The kids swarm around, selecting potential team-mates and practising their kicks. The Kafala Brothers, internationally known Angolan musicians, come twice a week to direct a student choir in traditional African melodies. Drawing, dancing and basketball classes captivate the children on other days.

In addition to the daily schedule, the teachers and volunteers organize occasional special events. On the International Day of the Child, on the first of June, the students donned colourful uniforms and participated in a programme of music, small skits, carnival games and crafts. The school grounds came alive with smiling, laughing faces playing tag games in circles, throwing home-made balls high in the air and trying to form pyramids of people. At the end of the day, the school's cooks had prepared a feast. They slaughtered two goats and cooked the meat along with WFP-delivered rice and beans, and

Update on Angola



WFP/Philippe Borel

Home for these children is now the street as their villages have been destroyed by fighting.

The hopes of a return to normality once elections took place in September 1992 ended when war broke out again in October. Since then the situation has deteriorated. Not only are many Angolans without food, they also lack other essentials such as clean water, medicines, vaccinations, shelter, clothing and the seeds, tools and oxen needed to plant crops.

WFP estimates that 2.06 million people will need food aid in 1994. This figure includes displaced people; those affected by the fighting but still in their homes; people hit by drought in the southwest; and former refugees who returned from Zaire and Zambia. Among this number are 177,500 pregnant and nursing women, malnourished children and the sick, who require supplementary or remedial feeding.

In September 1993, Unita suspended hostilities and fighting has diminished over much of the country. However, the problem remains of how to move food, as many roads and bridges have been mined or destroyed.

"If peace holds and mines are quickly cleared from some of the main roads and railway lines, then WFP can probably double its monthly deliveries," says Philippe Borel, WFP's Director of Operations in Angola.

An emergency operation was launched by WFP in June to supply 110,000 tonnes of food to 1.9 million people for six months. However, fighting hampered the continuous delivery of food to besieged provincial capitals, crowded with thousands of displaced people.

During the past six months, malnutrition rates have risen, not only in besieged cities but also in rural areas, where farmers are unable to tend their crops, and in coastal urban areas where food prices have risen dramatically. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, in the 12 months following the elections, the cost of food rose by almost 2,500 per cent, well beyond the reach of the majority of the population.

In many areas the situation is desperate. WFP nutritionist, Mercedes Velazquez, tells of one family with five children in Menonge who lived on yucca leaves, cats and rats; the two youngest children died of starvation in one week. In Malange, women crossed both Government and Unita trenches to forage for cassava and green leaves for their children. Many were killed, lost limbs to mines or were taken prisoner.

Since hostilities officially ended, WFP has increased food deliveries. In November 1993, WFP delivered 11,466 tonnes – 9,000 tonnes more than in June – of which 4,409 tonnes were sent by air. The number of airlift destinations has also doubled in the same period.

A permanent peace settlement still seems far off but if the cease-fire holds, in 1994 WFP expects to be able to reach the vast majority – over 90 per cent – of those in need all over the country.

WFP Mercedes Sayagues

The story of Manuel Antonio Alberto, 13 years old, is typical of many of the children. His father died when he was a baby and his mother moved from Huambo to Luanda and became mentally ill. Manuel was placed in an institution but then left to roam the streets of Luanda by day and sleep in churches at night. Rescued from the streets he is now at the school and his happiness shows.

served the meal with bread and fruit. No one studied much reading or maths that day, but the special treatment boosted the kids' self-esteem and their sense of comradeship.

WFP shipments now arrive in Angola's ports every month, bringing 10,000 to 34,000 tonnes of food. Meals are served to the students, teachers and guards at the Street Children's School, as well as two other DAPP schools currently located in the same neighbourhood.

At the Street Children's School, teachers carefully screen all the students before admission, in order to assure that their home situation and opportunities are truly limited. None of the food goes to waste and the recipients are expected to be a part of the ongoing activities, which contribute to their personal growth and the improvement of their community.

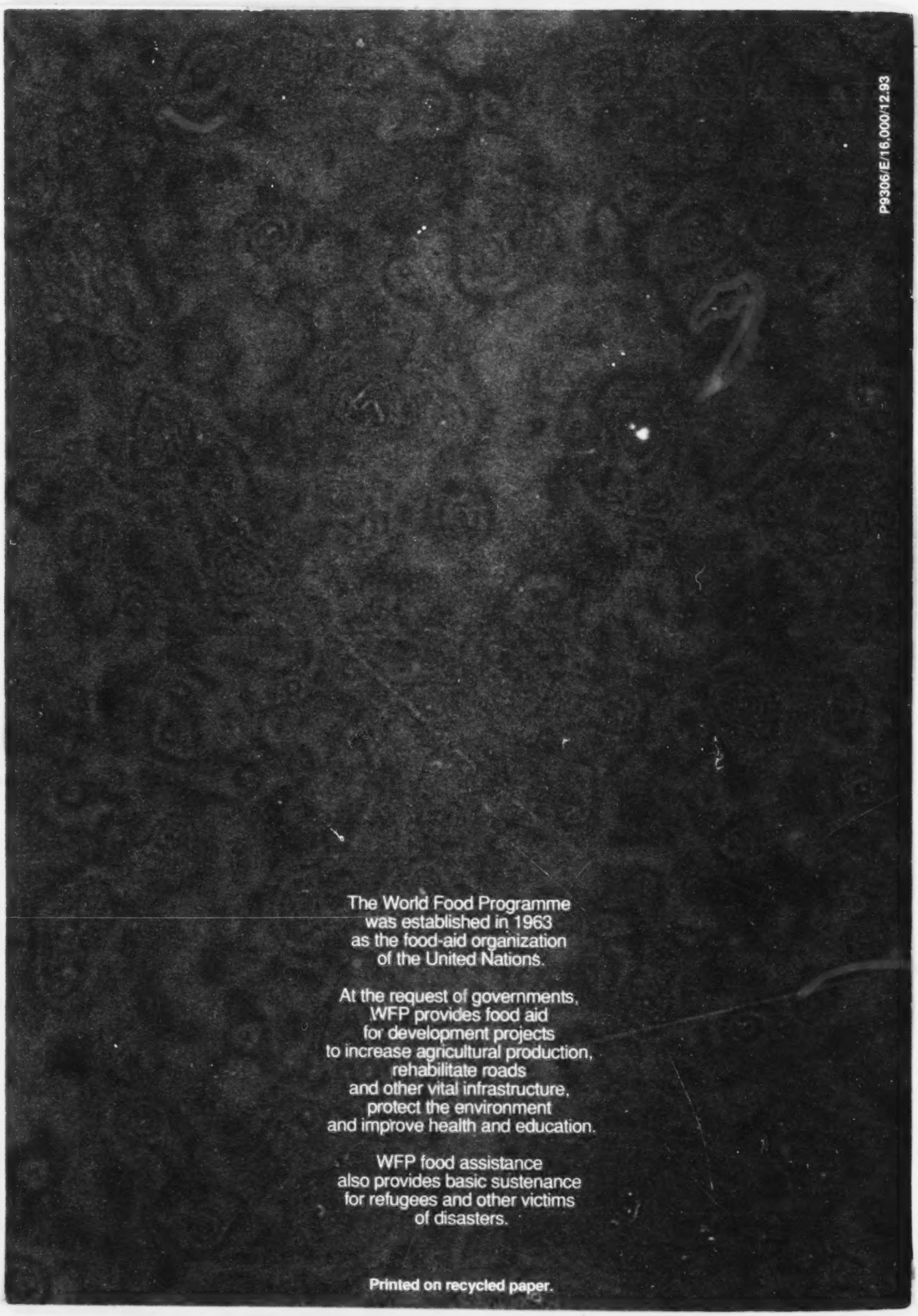
Coming from the distant USA, where the mysteries of international aid arouse suspicion among many, I was refreshed and excited to assist a project which elevates food donations from mere emergency relief and hand-outs to a crucial tool in the development and stabilization of Angola.

Clearly, the positive impact of a sack of rice is multiplied when it is served as part of a drive to bring children together to learn, to work side by side and hopefully, one day, to rebuild and lead their war-ravaged nation.

by Graham Potter

Graham Potter volunteered for six-months work with DAPP in Angola. He is currently a freelance writer based in the USA.

The opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily those of WFP.



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was established in 1963
as the food-aid organization
of the United Nations.

At the request of governments,
WFP provides food aid
for development projects
to increase agricultural production,
rehabilitate roads
and other vital infrastructure,
protect the environment
and improve health and education.

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